



Q: Why is *Oklahoma A+ Schools*® so successful where so many others have failed?

A: It's a whole school reform model. And when we say whole school, we mean whole school. The challenge for schools that send single teachers or limited teams of teachers in isolation to receive excellent professional development is: how do they convince other teachers *who have not been trained* that they have found a better way to teach? *Oklahoma A+ Schools*® eliminates the problem by requiring an 85% buy-in from all staff before accepting them into the network. Then, through a cadre of highly trained and accomplished individuals called our A+ Fellows, it provides the training necessary to enable schools to make the most of their own resources and community so that the work of the team is guided by locally-determined objectives with strong accountability to all children. Everyone has a stake in the outcome, from the school secretary, to the teachers, to the principals, to the parents in creating the school they want for the children they love.

A: It is sustainable. Research shows that most reform efforts fall apart in schools when the primary initiator (a strong principal, teacher or parent) leaves the school. Change is a way of life. In order to sustain the results we're finding in A+ Schools, the reform cannot die when things change. Our schools are sustaining the reform in spite of the inevitable changes that occur in schools.

A: It is ongoing. Further research clearly indicates the folly of what the *Education Trust* refers to as "drive-by professional development." The A+ Fellows who work with the schools are practicing teachers, specialists and artists who work in an ongoing way with schools. We are Oklahomans who respect and value Oklahomans. We will not disappear. We will respond when schools need us and provide coaching, mentoring and research-based information on reaching all children.

The busy, multi-faceted life of schools does not always fit a predetermined professional development schedule, thereby leaving out many educators who simply cannot always make their schedules work. *Oklahoma A+ Schools*® provides ongoing opportunities for initial training, practice, and further training, throughout the school year, much of it on-site where the children and teachers are!

A: It is comprehensive. When you think of the kind of school and education you want for a child you love, it is clear that schools must be prepared and trained to provide creative, problem-solving, collaborative practice. This includes an education rich in the arts, for all children. Anything less is socially unjustifiable. In order to capture the best ideas and solutions for our nation's future, it is imperative that we have mechanisms that enable all of our state's children to play on the same field. *Oklahoma A+ Schools*® uses a framework of eight A+ Essentials™ that allow schools to align their work with state-mandated curriculum, school and community goals, and best instructional practices.

A: It is collaborative. The best minds today, in education, business and community, understand and champion the role of collaboration in truly solving complex problems. Schools are complex. In order to do the best job we can in every way we can, we must work collaboratively. School infrastructures, historically, have been anything but collaborative, and teachers work in isolation throughout the day, with little contact with colleagues. *Oklahoma A+ Schools*® uses collaborative, research-based practices that build multiple networks: within schools, between schools, and within communities. Indeed, the A+ Schools' network spans the nation, connecting schools in five states, with inquiries from many more. It has garnered international attention and has a prominent place in national and international discussions. Just as important, though, are the connections made from family to school, enabling communication and participation from early childhood through high school for all families.

A: It is scalable. Nothing is more discouraging to educators than to hear a success story detailing how barriers have been overcome, only to learn that the resources that were required to get them there are simply not available to most other schools. While there are some programs and approaches that achieve results in one area or another, in most instances, there is a price tag attached that makes it unworkable for large numbers of schools to benefit from the results. *Oklahoma A+ Schools*®, by using the A+ Essentials™ framework, helps all schools to identify their community's resources and goals, working to provide a quality, whole school experience within that context. Some schools and communities naturally have access to more and better resources. *Oklahoma A+ Schools*® helps those schools maximize their effectiveness. Other schools are not as fortunate; however, that cannot excuse them from providing the best possible educational environment for their students. *Oklahoma A+ Schools*® helps those schools and their communities as well.

The fact is, good schools invariably are good in many ways. Good schools have highly trained and motivated staffs. They have parental involvement. They have strong reading and basic skills programs and achievement. They have multiple opportunities for students to learn objectives. They are stimulating, energetic places that utilize the arts, hands-on learning, and multiple learning pathways. They don't focus all of their resources in one area at the expense of all others. *Oklahoma A+ Schools*® builds the capacity of all communities to create the schools they want for the children they love.